

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, GW

SUBJECT: FRANCO-GERMAN SUMMIT OF JULY 8-9: DEFENSE

MINISTERS' MEETING

REFS: (A) PARIS 17450, (B) BONN 11320

1. AS EXPLAINED PREVIOUSLY TO EMBOFF BY DEFMIN CONTACT, THE GERMAN PURPOSE IN THE FIRST ROUND OF MEETINGS BETWEEN LEBER AND SOUFFLET WAS TO AVOID CONFRONTING THE NEW FRENCH DEFENSE MINISTER WITH MAJOR SECURITY POLICY ISSUES REQUIRING DECISION. ACCORDINGLY, THE DISCUSSIONS AT THE MINISTERIAL AND OFFICIAL DELEGATION LEVEL DID NOT INCLUDE THE POINTS SET FORTH IN PARAS 2 AND 3 OF REF A. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE IN DEFMIN LEBER'S OFFICE, EVEN SUCH SUBJECTS AS MBFR AND SALT WERE COMPLETELY EXCLUDED FROM THE DISCUSSION PROGRAM BECAUSE OF THE MANY POLICY RAMIFICATIONS INVOLVED. THE GERMAN FEELING WAS THAT SOUFFLET MUST FIRST HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE ISSUES IN SOME DEPTH PRIOR TO HIS BEING IN A POSITION TO UNDERTAKE SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL.

2. WITH REGARD TO FORWARD DEPLOYMENT OF FRENCH FORCES, CONFIDENTIAL

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IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE GERMAN BRIEFING FOR DEFMIN

SOUFFLET MIGHT HAVE RESULTED IN COMMENTS ABOUT THE NEED FOR SUCH DEPLOYMENT. THIS IS A RELATIVELY OLD PROBLEM WHICH IS WELL UNDERSTOOD BY BOTH SIDES. THE GERMANS GAVE THE SAME BRIEFING TO DEFMIN GALLEY WHEN HE VISITED BONN IN JUNE 1973. IT IS EVIDENT THAT FRENCH FORCES IN THE FRG ARE NOT DEPLOYED EFFECTIVELY TO HELP COUNTER THE THREAT IN THE CENTRAL REGION. THE GERMANS HAVE LONG CONSIDERED THE AUSTRO-CZECH BORDER AREA A WEAK SPOT. LOGICALLY, FRENCH REDEPLOYMENT TO THE AREA WOULD STRENGTHEN NATO DEFENSES. THE GERMANS DID NOT PRESS THE FRENCH ON THIS ISSUE, BUT RATHER PRESENTED A BRIEFING SIMILAR TO THAT GIVEN LAST YEAR AS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE FACT THAT THEIR THINKING ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF FORCES HAD NOT CHANGED. SIMILARLY, THE GERMAN POSITION ON PLUTON IS ALSO WELL KNOWN TO THE FRENCH, AND THE GERMANS DID NOT RAISE THIS ISSUE AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL.

3. THE SECURITY DISCUSSIONS DURING THE SUMMIT WERE CARRIED ON IN THREE FORA. FIRST, LEBER AND SOUFFLET MET PRIVATELY. SECOND, THE OFFICIAL DELEGATIONS MET. THIRD, INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE MARGINS OF THE OFFICIAL DELEGATION MEETING TOOK PLACE. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE POINTS REPORTED IN REF A RESULTED FROM SOME INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATIONS RATHER THAN FROM MINISTERIAL DISCUSSIONS. THE EMBASSY PERCEIVES NO SERIOUS DIVERGENCE BETWEEN THE TWO REFERENCED REPORTING CABLES, BUT BELIEVES THAT THE MINISTERIAL CONTEXT OF THE MEETING SHOULD BE DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHER INFORMAL EXCHANGES WHICH MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED.

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